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# THE JOURNAL OF AMERICAN FOLK-LORE.

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## CANADIAN-ENGLISH FOLK-LORE.

BY C. M. BARBEAU.

It is generally assumed by the casual observer that folk-lore is wanting among the Canadian people. Modern conditions and industrialism are supposed to have shattered most of the intellectual vestiges of the past.

To a few specialists, however, such an assumption is preposterous. It seems that the instinct of preservation and conservatism, far from having been lost altogether, is still deep-rooted, and that a large mass of popular or oral tradition is being handed down from the past. There is, indeed, positive evidence that if the collection of folk-songs, ballads, folk-tales, popular rhymes and sayings, proverbs, beliefs, games, or folk-remedies were now undertaken in earnest, a bountiful harvest would result. Many are the grandmothers, the country-folk, the cowboys and shanty-men, who to this day find much entertainment in the old-fashioned rehearsal of songs, formulas, or tales of the past.

The following first-hand contributions to the folk-lore of Ontario, although quite restricted in scope, will make it clear that modern communities are not by any means so barren of traditions as one might suspect; and it may be pointed out, moreover, that even the extensive collections here presented by Mr. F. W. Waugh and Mr. W. J. Winterberg have not been made under particularly favorable circumstances; that is, they are the result, not of systematic, subsidized investigation in a well-selected field, but merely of assiduity, chance, and perspicacity.

When a regular investigation was recently undertaken in a few Quebec localities, it proved overwhelmingly successful, as, in the course of a few brief periods of field-research, over one thousand variants of folk-songs and two hundred and forty folk-tales were recorded. There is no doubt that a similar yield should be expected from very many Canadian communities, especially in the older sections of the country.

Mr. J. A. Teit of Spences Bridge, B.C., whose first contribution on

Shetlandic folk-lore is to be found in the present volume, wrote to us: "I met a prominent Scotchman lately (Judge Calder), who lives in Ashcroft, B.C. When I discussed folk-lore with him, I found that he had a great fund of knowledge on these subjects, derived mostly from his mother, a Nova Scotian. He stated that much of the beliefs, stories, ballads, and so on, were the same as are obtained in the Highlands of Scotland, but that some were obsolete there that are now preserved only in the old Highland-Scotch settlements of Canada. In writing these things out in English, he said, much would be lost, as all is preserved and told in the Gaelic language. . . . I told him that it might be possible some time to get out a number of 'The Journal of American Folk-Lore' consisting of Canadian-Scottish lore, as you have already published other Canadian numbers." Mr. Teit has since given us the address of several good prospective Scotch informants in British Columbia, and has spoken of "some Nova Scotians who have a vast knowledge of the subject." Similar remarks, but applying to Scotch settlements in Ontario, were also made to us a few years ago by Dr. Alexander Fraser, Provincial Archivist, Toronto, who is an authority on Gaelic matters. Mr. William McInnes, Director of the Geological Survey, Ottawa, informs us that it is common knowledge that a large number of "Come-all-ye!" songs are still to be heard in the Canadian lumber-camps. Among other things, he remembers having heard the ballad of a battle on Chesapeake Bay against an American commander named Brooke, and also a recent shanty-song on the remarkable career of an old gray horse. Some one with a gift for metric form is, according to a common practice, appointed in almost every lumber-camp to recount or commemorate in new songs the current events of the season. We have also heard Col. W. P. Anderson, Chief Engineer in the Department of Marine and Fisheries, Ottawa, say that years ago, Irish people living in Dorchester County, Quebec, used to spend whole evenings listening to folk-songs and ballads, some of which, it seems, had as many as seventy verses. Other authorities have singled out Prince Edward Island and some other parts of the Maritime Provinces as being very conservative centres in which folk-lore still flourishes.

From these and other testimonies, it is clear that a large mass of oral tradition still survives in Canada, and that, on the whole, it is of the same type as that which, from the remote past, has been at the basis of literary and artistic productions in Europe. It is due merely to ignorance and lack of assimilative abilities, if little or no attention has yet been paid here to this important part of local history, and if school-children still have to use exclusively Old-Country books of nursery rhymes and folk-tales instead of being taught an appreciation of the valuable traditions and resources of their own community.

In England and most European countries, scientific periodicals have for a long time been devoted to the study of folk-lore materials; and the bibliography of independent publications on the subject would be an extremely long one. But little has ever been done along these lines in Canada; and the failure has itself apparently remained unnoticed.

The American Folk-Lore Society has, since 1888, issued "The Journal of American Folk-Lore," a quarterly, besides a number of memoirs, in which a large stock of American tradition has already been published. A few years ago, at the instance of Dr. Franz Boas, its editor, the Society enlarged its field to embrace Spanish-American and French-American folk-lore; and research has since been undertaken, with much success, in Mexico and Quebec. The yearly current numbers devoted to French and Spanish texts are proving insufficient, and additional memoirs are in preparation. A Quebec Branch was organized in 1917, the object of which is to assist in the study and publication of local traditions.

It is now proposed to extend the activities of the Folk-Lore Society to Ontario and other parts of Canada. The publication of the present volume, and the simultaneous organization of an Ontario Branch, will, it is hoped, lead to a more careful survey of the English, Irish, Scotch, Pennsylvania German, and other branches of oral lore in Canada, and to the periodical issue of other Canadian numbers of "The Journal of American Folk-Lore."

The officers of the Ontario Branch for 1918 are, —

*President*, Dr. Alexander Fraser, Provincial Archivist, Toronto.

*Vice-Presidents*, Mr. Lawrence J. Burpee, International Joint Commission, Ottawa; Mr. W. H. Clawson, Toronto University, Toronto; and Mr. W. J. Wintemberg, Geological Survey, Ottawa.

*Secretary*, Mr. C. M. Barbeau, Geological Survey, Ottawa.

*Treasurer*, Mr. F. W. Waugh, Geological Survey, Ottawa.

While the annual meetings of the Folk-Lore Society take place at the end of December in an eastern city of the United States, it is presumed that a yearly special meeting of the Ontario Branch will be held in conjunction with those of the Royal Society of Canada.

Any information on folk-lore data, their variants, or the localities in which they were observed, and the addresses of prospective informants in Canada, will be welcomed by the Secretary or any member of the Committee for the Ontario Branch.

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